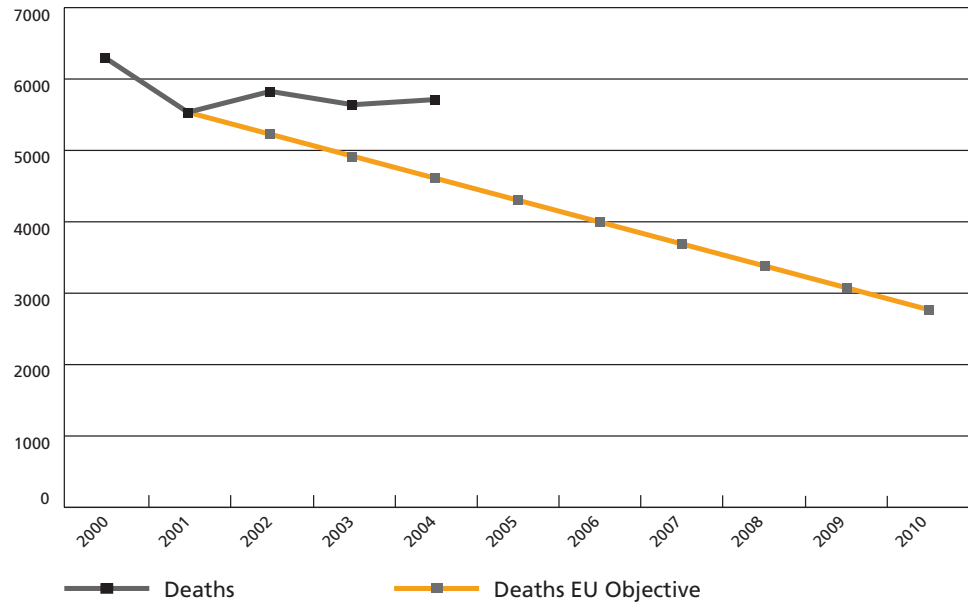


## 6.19 POLAND



**General Road Safety:** In Poland, the number of deaths decreased by 9.3% between 2000 and 2004. Still, 16 people die in traffic crashes every day and more than a third of these people are pedestrians. The severity of road accidents is particularly high, with 12 people killed per 100 road accidents. In 2004, traffic deaths actually went up again by 1.3% and pedestrian deaths increased by 6%. In 2005, this upward trend could be stopped.

Since 1993 Poland has had a National Road Safety Council (NRSC). It is headed by the Minister of Transport gathering representatives from a number of other ministers, the Chief of police and others. The NRSC coordinates the government's road safety policy and monitors its success. There are also Regional Road Safety Councils in all 16 regions.

Poland has also had a targeted road safety strategy since 2001 that was termed GAMBIT 2000. The target was no more than 4,000 deaths in 2010. In 2005, a new strategy was devised, including even more ambitious targets for 2007, 2010 and 2013. Five out of 16 regions have adopted their own regional road safety strategies.

Improving road user behaviour has been a priority in both the previous and the current national strategy. This includes amending legal acts related to speed and alcohol in traffic, improved enforcement and raising people's awareness of the risks related to the different behaviours. Subtargets for the different behaviours have been set.

About 7% of the Polish police force are specialised traffic police. Responsibility for road safety is mainly with the regional Chiefs of police while the National police board retains the right to launch national schemes and co-ordinate international actions. Work on a national enforcement plan has not been started.

**Speed.** The Polish police use automated equipment both in police cars and in checks carried out from the roadside. Radar guns are also in use. Checks are usually done on national roads and in places where speed-related accidents are frequent. In about 20 Polish towns, local authorities have also installed fixed safety cameras the majority of which are operated by the police.

Speeding continues to be the biggest road safety problem in Poland. In 2004, the number of accidents related to inappropriate speeds increased by 8%. There was also a 4% increase in traffic deaths in

built-up areas despite the fact that on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004 the speed limit in built-up areas was lowered. The limit has been changed from 50 km/h to 50 km/h in the day (from 5am to 11pm) whilst remaining at 60 km/h the rest of the time. Speed studies show that when the new limits took effect average speeds in major cities decreased slightly by 0.4 to 4.3 km/h.

In 2004, 75% of drivers were found to exceed the speed limit on main roads in urban areas and 54% on national roads. The target set out in GAMBIT 2005 is to reduce the frequency of speeding from 45% in 2003 to 22% in 2013 on all roads.

**Alcohol.** In Poland, the maximum BAC is 0.2 mg/ml. Alcohol is checked mostly in routine controls. Random breath testing actions, so called "road blocks", are also carried out but are not done systematically. They are usually done on national roads, seldom in urban areas, and they take place when the likelihood of drunk drivers being on the road is highest, e.g. on Fridays between 3 and 5pm.

Progress in combating drink driving has contributed significantly to the overall reductions in deaths. While the total number of traffic deaths has dropped by 9.3% from 2000 to 2004, the number of deaths from accidents caused by drunk drivers has decreased by 28.2%. The target set out in GAMBIT 2005 is to reduce the number of deaths from accidents caused by drunk drivers, pedestrians and cyclists to 6% in 2013.

**Seat belts.** Seat belt checks are usually done in combination with other checks. In 2004, first local actions dedicated solely to seat belt use took place. But seat belt rates need further improvement. In 2004, only 70% of front seat occupants and not even half of rear seat occupants used their seat belt in urban areas. The target set out in GAMBIT 2005 is to increase seat belt wearing in the front seats to 95% in 2013.

**Follow-up of offences.** Poland has had a penalty point system since 1993. The police can stop and fine a driver on the spot for a speeding offence but not for drink driving. All drink driving offences have to go to court. Sanctions can be severe but the severity of judgments varies considerably from court to court and often lower penalties are levied. Similarly, seat belt offences can result in a fixed fine of 150 PLN (37 €) but often only a warning is issued. The NRSC recommends in its 2004 annual report to issue more sanctions instead of warnings for traffic offences to strengthen the awareness that traffic offences do not go unsanctioned.

To follow up speeding offences detected by automated equipment the driver must be identified from the photo or video, otherwise no sanction can be imposed. There is now a draft law discussed at a very early stage to hold the owner liable for speeding offences committed with their car.

**Information.** Campaigns are run by a number of different organisations including also insurance companies and NGOs such as 'Road and Safety'. The National Road Safety Council has started a series of campaigns under the heading "Turn on thinking". This includes a major seat belt campaign which was run in 2005. The NRSC has also published a campaign calendar that details the timing of national campaigns on speeding, alcohol and seat belt use in 2006. Organisations such as "Road & Safety" also inform drivers on drink driving and the influence of speed on braking and the risk of linking bravado with speeding. Information leaflets are disseminated in conjunction with the police checks. In addition, the police usually inform the media about intensified enforcement actions.

#### **Recommendations**

- Bring up levels of enforcement to reach the behavioural targets linked to the overall death reduction target for 2013.
- Collect reliable seat belt wearing rates not only for urban areas but for all types of road.
- Improve the co-ordination of enforcement activities at a national level.
- Ensure appropriate follow-up of all detected offences.